

UZBEKISTAN BACKGROUNDER

(Republic of Uzbekistan)



Russia conquered Uzbekistan in the late 19th century. Stiff resistance to the Red Army after World War I was eventually suppressed and a socialist republic set up in 1925. During the Soviet era, intensive production of "white gold" (cotton) and grain led to overuse of agrochemicals and the depletion of water supplies, which have left the land poisoned and the Aral Sea and certain rivers half dry.

Independent since 1991, the country seeks to gradually lessen its dependence on agriculture while developing its mineral and petroleum reserves. Current concerns include insurgency by Islamic militants based in Tajikistan and Afghanistan, a non-convertible currency, and the curtailment of human rights and democratization.

Area: slightly larger than California (447,400 sq km)

Border countries: Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan

Terrain: mostly flat-to-rolling sandy desert with dunes; broad, flat intensely irrigated river valleys along course of Amu Darya, Sirdaryo (Syr Darya), and Zarafshon; Fergana Valley in east surrounded by mountainous Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan; shrinking Aral Sea in west

Climate: mostly midlatitude desert, long, hot summers, mild winters; semiarid grassland in east

Population: 25,155,064 (July 2001 est.)

Life expectancy at birth (2001 est.):

total population: 63.81 years

male: 60.24 years

female: 67.56 years

Ethnic groups: Uzbek 80%, Russian 5.5%, Tajik 5%, Kazakh 3%, Karakalpak 2.5%, Tatar 1.5%, other 2.5% (1996 est.)

Religions: Muslim 88% (mostly Sunnis), Eastern Orthodox 9%, other 3%

Languages: Uzbek 74.3%, Russian 14.2%, Tajik 4.4%, other 7.1%

Government type: republic; effectively authoritarian presidential rule, with little power outside the executive branch; executive power concentrated in the presidency

Capital: Tashkent (Toshkent)

Administrative divisions: 12 wiloyatlar (singular - wiloyat), 1 autonomous republic (respublikasi), and 1 city (shahri)

Independence: September 1, 1991 (from Soviet Union)

Constitution: new constitution adopted December 1992

Legal system: evolution of Soviet civil law; still lacks independent judicial system

Executive branch:

chief of state: **President Islom KARIMOV** (since March 1990, when he was elected president by the then Supreme Soviet)

election: president elected by popular vote for a five-year term; election last held January 2000 (next to be held NA January 2005)

note – extension of President KARIMOV's original term for an additional five years overwhelmingly approved - 99.6% of total vote in favor - by national referendum held March 1995

election results: Islom KARIMOV reelected president with vote percent - 91.9%; Abdulkhafiz DZHALALOV 4.2%

head of state: Prime Minister Otkir SULTONOV (since December 1995)

note – prime minister and deputy ministers appointed by the president

cabinet: Cabinet of Ministers appointed by the president with approval of the Supreme Assembly

Legislative branch: unicameral Supreme Assembly or Oliy Majlis (250 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms)

elections: last held December 1999 (next to be held NA December 2004)

election results: seats by party - NDP 48, Self-Sacrificers Party 34, Fatherland Progress Party 20, Adolat Social Democratic Party 11, MTP 10, citizens' groups 16, local government 110, vacant 1

note – not all seats in the last Supreme Assembly election were contested; all parties in the Supreme Assembly support President KARIMOV

Judicial branch: Supreme Court, judges are nominated by the president and confirmed by the Supreme Assembly

Political parties and leaders: Adolat (Justice) Social Democratic Party [Anwar JURABAYEV, first secretary]; Democratic National Rebirth Party (Milly Tiklanish) or MTP [Aziz KAYUMOV, chairman]; Fatherland Progress Party [Anwar Z. YOLDASHEV]; People's Democratic Party or NDP (formerly Communist Party) [Abdulkhafiz JALOLOV, first secretary]; Self-Sacrificers Party or Fidokorlar National Democratic Party [Ahtam TURSUNOV, first secretary]

Political pressure groups and leaders: Birlik (Unity) Movement [Abdurakhim

PULAT, chairman]; Erk (Freedom) Democratic Party [Muhammad SOLIH, chairman] was banned December 1992; Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan [Abdumanob PULAT, chairman]; Independent Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan [Mikhail ARDZINOV, chairman]

Diplomatic representation from the US: maintain embassy in Tashkent

Economy: Uzbekistan is a dry, landlocked country of which 10% consists of intensely cultivated, irrigated river valleys. More than 60% of its population lives in densely populated rural communities. Uzbekistan is now the world's third largest cotton exporter, a large producer of gold and oil, and a regionally significant producer of chemicals and machinery.

Following independence in December 1991, the government sought to prop up its Soviet-style command economy with subsidies and tight controls on production and prices. Faced with high rates of inflation, however, the government began to reform in mid-1994, by introducing tighter monetary policies, expanding privatization, slightly reducing the role of the state in the economy, and improving the environment for foreign investors. The state continues to be a dominating influence in the economy and has so far failed to bring about much-needed structural changes.

The IMF suspended Uzbekistan's \$185 million standby arrangement in late 1996 because of governmental steps that made impossible fulfillment of Fund conditions. Uzbekistan has responded to the negative external conditions generated by the Asian and Russian financial crises by tightening export and currency controls within its already largely closed economy. Economic policies that have repelled foreign investment are a major factor in the economy's stagnation. A growing debt burden, persistent inflation, and a poor business climate led to stagnant growth in 2000, with little improvement predicted for 2001.

GDP: purchasing power parity - \$60 billion (2000 est.)

GDP - per capita: purchasing power parity - \$2,400 (2000 est.)

Industries: textiles, food processing, machine building, metallurgy, natural gas, chemicals

Agriculture: cotton, vegetables, fruits, grain; livestock

Electricity - production by source: fossil fuel 86.4%; hydro 13.6%; nuclear 0%; other 0% (1999)

Exports: \$2.9 billion (2000 est.)

Export commodities: cotton, gold, natural gas, mineral fertilizers, ferrous metals, textiles, food products, automobiles

Export partners: Russia 13%, Switzerland 10%, UK 10%, Belgium 3%, Kazakhstan 4%, Tajikistan 4% (1999)

Imports: \$2.6 billion (2000 est.)

Import commodities: machinery and equipment, chemicals, metals; foodstuffs

Import partners: Russia 14%, South Korea 14%, Germany 11%, US 8%, Turkey 4%, Kazakhstan 4% (1999)

Debt - external: \$3.3 billion (1999 est.)

Economic aid - recipient: \$276.6 million (1995)

Currency: Uzbekistani sum (UZS)

Military branches: Army, Air and Air Defense Forces, Security Forces (internal and border troops), National Guard

Military manpower - military age: 18 years of age

Military manpower - availability (males age 15-49): 6,550,587 (2001 est.)

Military manpower - fit for military service (males age 15-49): 5,318,418

Military manpower - reaching military age annually (males): 274,602

Military expenditures: \$200 million (FY97)

Military expenditures - percent of GDP: 2% (FY97)

Disputes - international: occasional target of Islamic insurgents based in Tajikistan and Afghanistan

Illicit drugs: limited illicit cultivation of cannabis and very small amounts of opium poppy, mostly for domestic consumption, almost entirely eradicated by an effective government eradication program; increasingly used as transshipment point for illicit drugs from Afghanistan to Russia and Western Europe and for acetic anhydride destined for Afghanistan